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NEWS RELEASE

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‘If Iraq, why not Cuba?’ says Rep. Nethercutt

WASHINGTON – Today U.S. Rep. George Nethercutt (R-Wash.) called for the government to extend the same trading privileges to Cuba that it has just agreed to for Iraq.

Nethercutt issued the following statement at a Cuba Working Group press conference on Capitol Hill today:

“Two years ago, when Congress was debating legislation I sponsored, the Trade Sanctions Reform Act, authorizing sales of food and medicine to Cuba, I raised the question of inconsistency in America’s trade policy. At the time, Congress was also considering extending Permanent Normal Trade Relations to China, a repressive Communist state, with a troubling human rights record. I supported PNTR, but felt that we were not being consistent. I asked: ‘If China, why not Cuba?’

“As we release this highly instructive report today, outlining a new direction for U.S. policy toward Cuba, I believe the question we ask ourselves, as Members of Congress, has shifted slightly. Now the proper formulation should be, ‘If Iraq, why not Cuba?’

“Yesterday, the United Nations Security Council agreed unanimously to overhaul the sanctions regime on Iraq. Under the new system, Iraq will be allowed to freely import consumer goods without restriction. Dual-use items, those products with potential military applications, will continue to be reviewed by the Security Council.

“Until yesterday, the Security Council reviewed all items, dual-use and otherwise, to be imported by Iraq, *except for food and medicine*. **Iraq, a country openly hostile to the United States, and which appears to have a continuing and active program to develop chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, will now be allowed to purchase everything but dual-use technologies from the international market. By contrast, American exporters are not allowed to sell medicine to Cuba, and even exports of food commodities must be reviewed and licensed by the Administration. Every other U.S. export to Cuba is prohibited.**

“Yesterday, Secretary Powell said of the Security Council decision, ‘This significant step will improve the Iraqi regime’s ability to meet the needs of its people.’ I believe we should heed Secretary Powell’s call and similarly consider the needs of the Cuban people. If Iraq, why not Cuba?”

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